

The Weekly Word
October 9-15, 2017

Fall is in the air... and Jesus is always with us. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, October 9: John 4- I am he...

The sweeping moves of Jesus in John's gospel almost cause me to gasp. We are barely into the gospel and the author and Jesus, Himself, have made incredible statements about who Jesus is (John 1 and 3). As if to confirm this, Jesus has performed miracles, drawing people to Himself. He has crossed ethnic cultural boundaries taking God's gospel message to Samaritans through a woman. The result is, many in one Samaritan town, accepting His message and believing.

The works of Jesus, the message of Jesus is exhilarating and liberating. He is the fountain of living water (10). With that word picture Jesus offers the woman and us that which is the fountain of life... Himself. God's Messiah... *I who speak to you am he* (26).

Jesus continues to offer Himself to us today and every day the world exists.

I sit and bless God, the Father for the gift of Jesus.

I sit and bless Jesus for coming and offering Himself as the way of salvation.

I sit and bless the Holy Spirit for opening my eyes to Jesus so that I might believe and be saved.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above you heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost...

Thank You Jesus for offering yourself to that woman and through her offering Yourself to the world and to me! Amen and amen.

Tuesday, October 10: John 5- The wonder of eternal life...

On one hand it is difficult to choose one verse or a couple of verses upon which to ponder and meditate. The chapter is rich and full with Jesus' teaching. And yet amidst the wonder of the chapter and its declarations about Jesus' identity, one verse grabbed me.

Verse 24 is another of the gospels declarations of the eternal life Jesus will grant to all who believe in him. *Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*

To hear and believe is the ticket to eternal life. To hear Jesus' Words and believe in the Father, the one who sent Him.

I love the cascading image of eternal life. Eternal life as a phrase speaks about living forever. To that Jesus adds that the person with eternal life *will not be judged*. So eternal life also means acceptance by God. If I widen my biblical horizon for a moment, since *all have sinned* (Romans 3:23) the only way I will not be judged is if my sins are forgiven, so being accepted by God means I am forgiven. (This of course fits the narrative of the entire New Testament.)

The understanding of eternal life grows even more when Jesus says the one with eternal life *has crossed over from death to life*. Again in the wider New Testament I was reminded of Colossians 1 13-14: *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. The cross

over from life to death happens immediately. We can experience life here and now. Eternal life is not just a future gift. It is a present gift that carries us into forever.

What a gift eternal life is... what a joy to ponder this gift this morning.

Oh, Jesus, thank you for the gift of eternal life You give to all who believe!!!! I am rejoicing today in You and the gift You have given. Amen.

Wednesday, October 11: John 6- Perspective...

The scope of teaching in this chapter is as cavernous as the Grand Canyon, far too grand to handle in one short devotional. Surprisingly, it was verse 6 that caused me to pause and ponder.

He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. This sentence is an addition by the author John into the narrative. John, who is now an old man, has had years to ponder and consider the things of Jesus. He has lived a full and faithful life and as he pens his gospel, he slips in these brief words that grows out of his years walking with and serving Jesus.

Recalling the feeding of the 5000 John realized that Jesus' question to Philip, "*Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?*" (5). Jesus *asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.* That is not something one would realize in the moment, because in the moment people would have been carried away by the enormity of the situation and the miracle Jesus performed to alleviate the hunger need of the crowd.

As I pondered this I realized that many things in life need the perspective of years and thought and sometimes aging to more full understanding (I don't know that we ever fully understand things).

In my 20's I was enamored by the delight and beauty of my fiancé. I had no idea what richness she would bring into my life over the ensuing decades.

As the disciples stood at the cross they saw their Lord and friend die. Only after His resurrection and ascension did they begin to understand the true meaning of it all.

It has taken time and continued understanding poured into my life by the Holy Spirit to begin to grasp many of the truths of the Christian faith.

John's tiny addition into the account is a reminder to me that many things take time to more fully understand and that this is especially true with faith.

My faith is so much deeper as I have walked with Jesus these 40+ years.

Living in God's Word repeatedly and deeply over the course of years unlocks treasures of faith.

Stick with the Lord. Walk and wrestle and live as faithfully as you can and over time the canvas of faith will grow more beautiful with the added shades and hues of a growing discipleship.

Lord, thank You for years in Your Word, which never grows dull and is always full of new insights and rich wisdom for life. Thank You, Jesus, for prompting John to write his gospel years later and the richness it brings to understanding Your years of ministry on earth and Your gospel message. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, October 12: John 7- Who is Jesus to you?...

On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? (40-41).

People were divided as to who they thought Jesus was. Some thought one thing and some another. Pharisees thought he was a liar and a blasphemer.

The gamut was as wide in Jesus' day as it is today. Today some believe He is Messiah, others think He was a great religious teacher and no more. Still others think He and religion is all fake, made up by weak people who need something in which to believe.

I guess little has changed in the 2 millennia since Jesus' day. The same question still remains... who do you think Jesus was/is?

I believe He is God's Messiah and God Himself. I am proud to say so and I pray you come to the place in life where you believe this, too.

Jesus, I look forward to the day when everyone will proclaim You Lord. As Paul writes in Philippians, 'every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth'. Halleluiah. In Your name I pray, Amen

Friday, October 13: John 8- The essential need to believe in Jesus...

Yesterday one who believes Jesus was front and center in my reading of chapter 7. Today part of the answer why that is important surfaced as I read.

There was so much in this chapter, after I read I went back and looked at some verses that grabbed my attention. They are below.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (12).

I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins" (24).

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (31-32)

Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death" (51).

When I put these verses together and read them one after another, why belief in Jesus is so important, came to life.

Verse 12: He is the light of the world. Light leads and directs us when the way is dark. When I travel in Africa a flashlight is essential gear. Night is dark and they do not have street lights and many houses have minimal light, so if you are walking after dark you need a light. In our dark and confusing world where there are all manner of 'truths' taught from all kinds of perspectives we need the light Jesus provides to find our way. Jesus is the light.

Verse 24: spoken from the negative position, people who do not believe in Jesus die in their sins. Every Jew knew to die in sin was to be separated from God in the afterlife.

Verses 31-32: Jesus' teachings give us truth and His truth will set us free.

Verse 51: obedience to Jesus means no death, i.e., eternal life.

Now of course if you don't believe Jesus you won't believe these things. However, those who believe Jesus do believe these things, which explains why belief in Jesus is so essential to life now (He is the light) and life here after (He alone can remove sins and usher us into eternal life).

I believe... do you?

Thank You, Jesus, for all Your spiritual works on behalf of those who put their trust and faith in You. Alleluia. Amen.

Saturday, October 14: John 9- Peer pressure...

The pressure placed on the parents by the religious establishment was enormous. The religious leaders held the 'keys' to the community and if you stepped out of bounds they could lock you out. Locked out you were separated from your friends, your community, your religion. In other words you were completely isolated. Answering the Pharisees inquisition was delicate.

The blind man's parents found a clever way out. *"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."* His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, *"He is of age; ask him"* (20-23)

But for most, there are no clever non-responses that can save us at times like these.

The pressure the parents felt most of us can relate to in one degree or another. Lunch break at work, a religion question comes up. "Are you one of those religious conservatives?" How do you answer? You won't be put out of work but you feel the pressure.

I can think of a hundred scenarios like this in my country where we have religious freedom. Many more Christians face far more pressure in countries where it is illegal to be Christian, where being exposed as a Christ-follower could cost you your life.

How do you respond to the pressure peers and authorities can put on you for your faith?

The parents were able to skirt the answer. The healed blind men could not and would not and he was excommunicated from his synagogue for his statement. He was healed and had found Jesus and that was all that mattered to him.

Ultimately we answer these inquisitions based on what matters to us...

Does Jesus matter more than anything else... acceptance by peers or even life itself?

Think about it...

Lord, there have been times when I failed this test. I know I am forgiven for those lapses but there are times they still haunt me. Give me strength today to pass any peer pressure tests that come my way. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, October 15, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.